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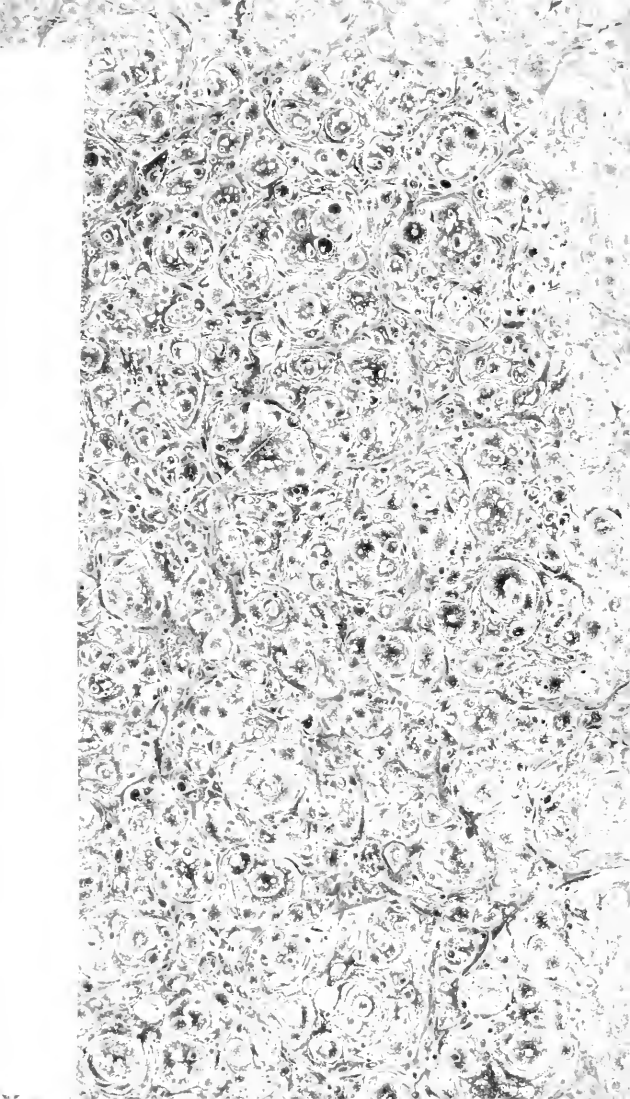


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PETOLETTI.

BY

HENRY BAILEY.

THE PASSIONS ARE THE WINDS OF LIFE,—TAKE HEED
THEY RISE NOT INTO HURRICANES.

LONDON :

LUPTON RELFE, 13, CORNHILL.

1826.

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Although Preface or Appendix to the Poem of "PETOLETTI" has been purposely avoided, some explanation is necessary. The general plan of the story comprises two successive plots, which, properly, should be combined: the first, however, is in itself complete, and is the only part at present published.

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TO
THOMAS FOWELL BUXTON, ESQ. M.P.
AS A TOKEN OF RESPECT
FOR HIS ENDEAVOURS TO DIMINISH
THE NUMEROUS ENACTMENTS WHICH DECREP
THAT PRESUMPTUOUS STRETCH OF HUMAN POWER,
THE PUNISHMENT OF DEATH;
AND WHICH ARE INJURIOUS TO THE INTERESTS, THE JUSTICE,
AND THE CHARACTER
OF THE COUNTRY—
THIS WORK IS INSCRIBED BY
HENRY BAILEY.

London, June, 1826.



PETOLETTI.

CANTO I.

NIGHT's storms have pass'd; the mists of morning
bring

A calm o'er nature past imagining.

Is yon the gentle spirit of that calm—

Yon pensive lady o'er those groves of balm?

It is, it must; the brilliant corridor

Wherein she sits—those shrubs embroider'd o'er

With purple bloom, form but an airy bower

To couch the placid genius of the hour:

And yet, methinks, no angel of repose

Could e'er be trac'd in lineaments like those!

It is no spirit! sorrow watch'd the birth

Of that fair creature—'tis a child of earth:

That breast of sighs, that melting eye of dew,
Prove her a daughter of misfortune too.
Yet what, in such a spot and clime as this,
Can cheat so young a maiden of her bliss?
A clime, where fruits and blossoms burst and breathe
Together in one ever-living wreath,—
A spot, whose mansions, with the wealth they hold,
Are marble mountains, hoarding mines of gold.
Ah! 'tis not radiant hall, nor roseate grove,
Can always yield the luxuries we love;
No, no; the heart can cloud, by magic pow'r,
The brightest scenes of palace or of bow'r.

Thus felt that pensive maiden, as she view'd
Night's lingering vapours by the morn subdued,
And saw, before the garish light of day,
A rainbow's fragile beauty pass away.
“ So fades,” she cried, “ the dreams to childhood
giv'n—
“ So fleets the bow of hope from youth's fair heav'n.
“ What though, where'er I turn, a ready smile
“ Waits on my presence,—I am sad the while;

“ And pine in loneliness—pine more to see
 “ Each being round me bless’d with sympathy.
 “ No charm is mine, though pleasure’s spells be wove
 “ Thick in this ever-green elysian grove.
 “ Here stranger-trees from climes of snow or sun,
 “ Embracing grow as though their homes were one ;
 “ And there the timid deer desert the shade
 “ For social revels in the sunny glade.
 “ Here bees in concert hum, and there the flowers
 “ Wear brighter liveries when they meet in bowers.
 “ And, hark ! the free-born tenants of the trees
 “ Together sing their mutual harmonies ;
 “ Even the dove, who, frightened in his nest,
 “ Will flutter thence for succour to my breast,—
 “ Whose tutor’d fearfulness instructs his beak
 “ The daintiest food from my fond hand to seek,
 “ From human sympathy, by instinct, roves,
 “ To join the winged playmate whom he loves.
 “ Then is it strange that I—lone—mute—confin’d—
 “ Should seek the music of some kindred mind ?
 “ What lists it, Petoletti, that these walls,
 “ And every slavish foot that in them falls,

“ Call thee their lord, when thou hast made no tone

“ Of genial feeling echo to my own ?

“ But see ! in yon intense horizon’s light,

“ What darksome figure lingers on the height ?

It moves—it leaves the mountain’s topmost ridge ;

It pauses on the distant ravine’s bridge,

Whose slender arch appears but as a trace

Left by some fairy who hath pass’d the place.

It glides along ;—now quits the dizzy steeps,

Dropping from crag to crag,—now reckless leaps

Across their pathless clefts,—descends the rocks ;

Now wanders where some unwrought marble blocks

Scatter a rivulet, whose troublous flow

Runs in bright mazes to the lake below.

’Twas Petoletti :—lo ! the plains—the fort

He reach’d—he pass’d ;—he cross’d the palace court.

Dank with the night-dews—flagging, his black
plume

Hung o’er his forehead, deepening the dark gloom

For ever settled there like mists on high

Around some mountain-brow of mystery ;—

That gloom which did but quicken more amaze,
 Because its cause still baffled every gaze :
 Did serious wonder, or less serious whim,
 Bring eyes to look, or heads to muse on him,
 His eagle orb would dart a dazzling ray
 To blind their search, or turn unscann'd away.
 But seldom would his mood allow one chance
 For curiosity to fix its glance.
 Fondly his foot would fly—his bark would sail
 Among the varied wonders of the vale
 For savage joys ; and whensoever they came
 From earth or sky, rock, mountain, wave, or flame,
 His spirit's darkness, at the rapturous gaze,
 Would burst, like thickest smoke, into a blaze.
 Were these the frantic strugglings to be freed
 From phantom-thoughts of some long-buried deed ?
 Such was the question of a pondering train
 In his own time, such may be ask'd again ;
 But still they sought—they seek in vain to know,
 No answer solv'd them then, no record now.
 Whate'er they were, nor misery nor remorse
 Can bend his stubborn will before their force.

And now that maid is left within his power
By her fond sire, in too confiding hour,
His mind resolves, by soft, insidious wile,
Her unsuspecting innocence to spoil ;
That he, ere long, may riot on her charms,
And meet a mutual welcome in her arms.
He speeds—he gains the gardens ; though each spot
Abounds with beauties, they bewitch him not.
Though scatter'd blooms lay there, as though far
 bowers
Of amaranth above had rain'd down flowers,
Though silvery glimpses from the neighbouring lake
Peep'd through the darkling shrubs his eye to
 wake,—
Though truant streams with native waters stray,
And, dimpling, woo his gaze to watch their play,—
Though shade and sunshine frolicsomenely move,
As glad out-leaping spirits of the grove,
Gaily responsive to the tremulous bliss
Which runs through every leaf at Zephyr's kiss,—
Yet on he sped, regardless of each sweet,
Which, blushing, bent its beauty at his feet,

Or bolder touch'd his brow ; onward he sped,
 Drifting those snows the myrtle boughs had shed,
 And climb'd the stairs of marble, whose ascent
 Led to the victim of his dark intent :
 And now the terrace, with an air of pride,
 He hurried o'er ;—anon was at her side.
 And now his lip, with delicate salute,
 Dispers'd her tears ; and now, no longer mute,
 Bright'ning with smiles, like meteors which the ray
 Of pilot stars assume to lure astray,
 He cheering cried, “ What ! sorrowing even now,
 “ When heav'n so blithesome shines upon thy brow?
 “ Behold ! the sun-blush on yon snowy peak
 “ Rivals the kiss-rais'd rose upon thy cheek ;
 “ And, see, the rising deity of light
 “ Demands a smiling homage at the sight.
 “ And wilt thou still sigh on, my darling child?
 “ Will not that sadness ever be beguil'd?
 “ In sooth it must ; 'twere guilt to let that mind,
 “ Which grows more fragile as it grows refin'd,
 “ Like fragrance wasting while it charms the sense,
 “ Thus perish by its very redolence.

- “ ’Twere treachery too ;—for when the voice of war
“ Call’d thy illustrious sire to climes afar,
“ Did he not trust thee to my guardian care?—
“ Bid me each wish observe, each joy prepare,
“ Which might console thee? Let not, then, this
 strain
“ Mock all our hopes, and make my labours vain ;
“ For his—for my sake, smile ; alas ! thy years
“ Of youth and beauty should not pass in tears.
“ Is not my son, Fazello, with that chief?
“ Yet I do not abandon me to grief—
“ Look up?”

Her rais’d eye met his pitying gaze—

A flood of tears his tenderness repays.

- “ And yet,” she sobb’d, “ whene’er I think upon
“ The foe, to quell whose fierceness they have gone,
“ I cannot cease to fear ;—e’en now—ah, me !
“ I may not have a parent left but thee.”

She gaz’d upon his face, she heard him sigh,
And the big drop stood quivering in her eye.
He turn’d ; he saw the deity of day,
Gilding those turrets by his tranquil ray ;—

Those ancient villas on the lake's far coast,
Whose fallen pride no other beam can boast.
He mark'd each heavenly tint, each earthly spot,
Whose peaceful hues his mind could image not :
He wav'd his hand,—and, through the lingering tear,
She saw that sign—he bade her lend her ear ;
And, pointing to those ruins on the shore
Ting'd by the glowing sun, recounted o'er
Tales of old times when many a villa, fraught
With syren joys, voluptuously had taught
The ancient Roman to cast off the net
Of tangling cares, and in delight forget,
While there he spent the summers of his life,
The foreign warfare or the civil strife :—
He trick'd the vices of the fair and brave
In that false lustre which their greatness gave ;
And, knowing that the ear of youth the more
It madly listens to forbidden lore,
The more it craves, he fill'd her longing mind
With honey-words that leave a sting behind.
Then cried, while signing to where chastely shone
A convent's whitening steeple in the sun,

“ And did I never to thine ear reveal
“ How fain thy father, from misguided zeal,
“ Had nipp’d thy budding beauties ere their bloom,
“ By burying them within yon worse than tomb,
“ But for my counsel, which could see thy mind
“ By nature was for other use design’d ;
“ Thou know’st her lavish gifts to thee, were best
“ Employ’d, to make some doting mortal blest ;
“ Thou know’st they were.” She did not understand
His meaning, but his manner was so bland,
That, tempted by the kindly mien she view’d,
She charg’d him with his more uncourteous mood :
“ Forgive me? ’tis the folly of a child—
“ I cannot bear thee when thy looks are wild ;
“ And now thine eye beams mildly, might I say
“ How oft it grieves me, at the close of day,
“ To see thee from my lute all wayward spring—
“ Face the rude storm—nor even round thee fling
“ Thy cloak for shelter—but, with fearless gaze,
“ Look on the lightnings in their fiercest blaze.
“ Nay, do not frown ; indeed, to give thee pain,
“ I meant it not ;—but now thou smil’st again—

" Oh ! didst thou always look thus placidly,
 " Methinks, how happy would thy daughter be !"
 He gaz'd benignly, and his features grew
 More placid, as they met her placid view ;
 For in her eyes, whose flashes lately gave
 The bright revealings of the troubled wave,
 He saw that look of gentleness and grace
 Which lives along the lake's unruffled face.
 He gaz'd benignly still ;—what soothing spell
 Thus binds that heart o'er which, 'tis strange to tell,
 Nature's serenest, most consoling calm,
 Were withering blight—her tempests fresh'ning balm?
 It was that spell, almost omnipotent,
 Which guards, oftimes, the young and innocent ;
 While deeply whispering in his breast of care,
 The still small voice of conscience cries " Forbear."
 He breath'd a rarer atmosphere,—he caught
 The freshness of her purity of thought,
 And when one murky feeling rose again,
 To cloud his visage and obscure his brain,
 Her soft lute breath'd,—and, O ! the witching lay,
 Chas'd, for a moment, every cloud away.

And but a moment ; for, as soon as mute
The magic breathings of that melting lute
His soul relaps'd,—his scowling eye fell on
A dial, welcoming the rising sun—
Sudden he deems her simple mind, as true,
Will shine to any beam that greets her view ;
And should he shadow her from purer ray,
And make the meteor-lights of luxury play
Around her heart, he vainly hopes to find
'Twill passive err, and answer to his mind.
The doubt is o'er,—the firm resolve succeeds
To gain his purpose by yet subtler deeds ;
His purpose wing'd to fly more fierce, more fell,
Enfranchis'd from the unavailing spell.
Thought springs to action ; and with books of love
He strews each chosen haunt and favourite grove ;
Then waits till brighter hours more zeal inspire,
To pluck the tender nursling of desire ;
While, sooth'd by hopes to realize his dream,
His brow still wears its more complacent beam.
She read those books,—she hail'd that gentle look,
But knew not from what fires its radiance broke,

And strove, with all the woman's touching mood,
To give him token of her gratitude.

Sweetly she cried, one golden holiday,

"Have I not, dearest guardian, heard thee say,

"The gorgeous scarf, which often I have plac'd,

"Around thy form, where each the other grac'd,

"Was torn in yon rude forest? so I thought

"This foolish sash, by my own fingers wrought,

"Though poor it be, the work of nicest care,

"Perchance, thou would'st for my sake deign to wear."

He takes the pledge,—he takes the fondness too,

And fancies in that fondness he can view

An image of his flame; but when he tries

To speak his passion, words expire in sighs;

Yet, howsoever mute his lips with fear,

How more than eloquent his looks appear,

The while he thinks, enraptur'd by such bliss,

Her eye reflects the eloquence of his.

The charm seem'd perfect, still he dared not speak,

For fear his breath the finished work might break;

But doubting not her heart had caught the glow

Of early love, he left it there to grow,

Warm'd by the feeling which will raise it best,
Of her too tender and too trusting breast.

Seeking one morn the victim of his guile,—
Himself a victim, to her beauty's wile,—
He found her laid a silken couch along,
Won by the witcheries of some syren song.
“ Good morrow, pretty Idler ! why this fear
“ At my approach ? Ha ! child, what hast thou here ? ”
She blush'd, she trembled, held the volume down ;
He took,—he open'd it,—she fear'd his frown—
For 'twas a tale of love, when, strange ! she found—
Her hand in his, by tender pressure bound.
She started,—turn'd her glowing cheek aside,—
“ Thou need'st not tremble,” with a smile, he cried ;
“ To read is no transgression, nor to feel ;
“ Thy only fault—if any—to conceal.
“ Then thou hast often read such tales ? Perchance,
“ Hast more than read,—hast known a transient
glance
“ Of that sweet feeling ? No : that could not be,—
“ Few have e'er cross'd thy path,—and as for me,—

“ But read aloud ! ”—she felt another blush,—
 “ Read ! read ! if thou my troubled soul would’st
 hush.”

He gave the book ;—she, faltering, murmur’d o’er
 The sweetest stanzas of Italian lore.

“ There ! stay ! O stay ! ” her passive hand he
 caught ;

While she, imagining his sterner thought
 Had spied some moral, with a simple look
 Fix’d on his eye, clos’d the bewitching book ;
 And seem’d to wait, mistrustful of the lay,
 His light of mind its meaning to display.

What could be more felicitous ? This chance
 Comes like a guerdon on his vigilance.

Again he grasps her hand,—he looks,—he sighs,
 But she is skill’d not in such mysteries.

Still is he mute ; ’tis, haply, from distress,
 At her high worth,—his own unworthiness.

He rais’d her hand,—his lip, with glowing bliss,
 Like sultry air on snow-drops, breath’d a kiss.

But though that touch alarm’d the virgin sense,
 Her mind still slept the sleep of innocence.

She only felt a wish to leave the spot,
And fear'd—but what she fear'd, alas! knew not.
“ My dearest maid, stay! wherefore would'st thou rove?
“ What was our theme?”

“ Methinks, my lord, 'twas love.”

“ Ay, come then, to thy doting guardian show
“ What thy young heart may of the mystery know!
“ Come, tell me? Nay, now,—why would'st thou
conceal?

“ All, all have felt it,—feel,—or wish to feel!”

“ Perchance they may; my heart, from fancy's
themes,

“ Hath felt such winning—yes, such witching dreams,
“ I almost deem'd,—and shall I tell the whole?”

“ All! all!—why linger? Bare thy inmost soul.”

“ I almost deem'd—ah! see, how I confide—
“ My tender heart was form'd for nought beside.
“ And more,—by feeling's sweet romance confus'd,
“ Methought I felt the passion I perus'd;

- “ Sighing for some dear mortal, on whose breast
 “ To pour my blessing, while my own was blest.
 “ Should e’er such creature greet these longing
 eyes,
 “ Form’d with my taste and years to sympathise,
 “ How much my raptures then would be above
 “ These fancies now,—for, O! my heart would
 love.
 “ But, hold! my heedless words too forward
 grow,—
 “ Why passeth thus thy hand across thy brow?
 “ I’ll fling the casement back; the purer air
 “ May cheer thy faintness,—do not shun my care.”
- “ ’Twas nothing,—but one transitory pain:
 “ Fear not,—no matter,—all is well again.
 “ Now listen, Gelardoni! thou art fool’d;
 “ Thy native fervour should be better school’d.
 “ Let, then, each gentle lesson I impart,
 “ Grav’d in the youthful feelings of thy heart,
 “ Grow, like the trace upon the tender bark
 “ Of sapling beeches, to a giant mark.

“ For I would have my burning words remain,
“ Writ in the proudest chamber of thy brain ;—
“ Would have them start upon thy mental sight,
“ In talismanic characters of light.”
She rose again,—essay’d, once more, to stray,—
He held her back,—he cried, “ I prithee stay !
“ What though thy beauties are all, all matur’d,
“ Scarce sixteen summers have thy days endur’d,—
“ The flowers are blooming, yet how green the fruit ;
“ Taste then the vintage of experience.” Mute—
Amaz’d she stood,—“ the sympathy of years ?—
“ Tush ! ’tis a fancy that beguiles to tears.
“ ’Twine thee the buds and tendrils of thy youth
“ Round man,—round twice, thrice sixteen summers’
growth ;
“ The very rankness of such young desires,
“ Choaking and choak’d, with its own sweets ex-
pires :
“ But, O ! the passion of a riper year
“ Thrives as the ever-green, that knows no sear ;
“ Yes,—and to prove it,—O ! my life ! my heart !
“ My hope of hopes !”—he gave a sudden start,

And straight had knelt him at her feet, but she,
Unmindful cried, "What vision do I see?"

"What gallant cavalier advances now

"Down yonder road around the mountain's brow?"

"Here!—stand where I do:—there! o'er yonder
larch—

"Behold! he gains the meadows,—through that
arch

"Now disappears. Who can this stranger be?"

"Did'st note with what a matchless mastery

"He sate his steed of snow?—and then, how shone

"His fluttering crest of feathers in the sun?"

"And when his crimson mantle, unconfined,

"Would, from his shoulder, wanton with the wind,

"I never shall forget the shape of light,—

"The dazzling shape that burst upon my sight.

"Methinks,—alas! thou hear'st me not;—what
grief

"Makes thee so thoughtful? Knowst thou, then,
that chief?

"I crave thy grace; and yet what eye could see,

"And seek to know no more?—Who can he be?"

“ Hold ! whither would'st thou go ?—stay !—list !—

I hear

“ The trampling of his horse,—it draweth near,—

“ Loud and more loud it grows,—I pray thee, wait,—

“ Hark ! hark ! what thunders rattle at the gate !”

CANTO II.

WHAT was that vision, which, like lightning-flame,
A moment flash'd, and then in thunders came,
To claim admittance through the fortress' bars?
'Twas young Fazello, hastening from the wars,
To hang his peaceful banner on its stall,
And add new trophies to his father's hall.

The summons answer'd,—past the gate and fort,
He gallops on,—he halts him in the court ;
And, leaping from his saddle, hails with joy
Each vassal-face familiar from a boy.
And now the conqueror, at the Prince's feet,
Obedient kneels,—the son and father meet ;

For, touch'd with love, a kindred feeling warms
The tyrant's breast—he lifts him to his arms.
Then leads him to the palace,—no, his home ;
For well he weens, who knows what 'tis to roam,
That is the dearest name : the garden airs
Had sweeter grown,—he mounts the marble stairs.
Homeless as air so long, around his frame
The large saloons with closer comfort came ;
His feeling was the dreamer's rest from pain,
Who wakes, from wanderings, in his couch again.
He ask'd for Gelardoni, long'd, in sooth,
To clasp the little playmate of his youth ;
But, when he met her, felt a moment's chill,
To find her not the same young fondling still.
The bud was pass'd,—the flow'et was full blown ;
The playful child to womanhood had grown,

All hearts are glad but one ; who finds, with
fear,
A parent long, long look'd-for, comes not here.
“ Tell me,” she cried, and how her pulses beat,—
“ Young hero, is my father living yet?”

" Yes, Gelardoni, yes, thy parent lives ;
 " But now the magic of his presence gives
 " To other nations a propitious aid ;
 " For, unlike me, war is, alas ! his trade.
 " Hold ! in my joy, I had forgot before,—
 " These treasur'd packets,—they will tell thee
 more."

With trembling hand, she took,—she kiss'd them,—
 ran

Up to her chamber, to conceal from man
 Maidenly feelings,—broke the signet,—then
 Read, wept, and mus'd,—mus'd, wept, and read
 again ;

And when her full heart's throb grew calmer, thought
 Upon that herald who those tidings brought ;
 Nor can her memory trace, through life or lore,
 Features so bright,—bewildering bright—before :
 No more like those he wore in hours long gone,
 Than earliest day-break to the mid-day sun.
 She mus'd upon that beam his brow had shed
 When turning to becalm her rising dread :

And as she mus'd, what tremors shook her breast,—
Tremors all new to her untutor'd breast.

Yet, silly Innocent! by thoughts beguil'd,
That less beseem'd the woman than the child,
Reckless she sigh'd,—“ Ah! wherefore should I start,
“ To find this glow,—this flutter in my heart?
“ 'Tis but the grateful echo to that voice,
“ Whose words of comfort made its pulse rejoice.”

Heralds now bear to every neighbouring court,
The Prince's pleasure, that for festal sport,
Soon as the sun-beams of the third day die,
Its knights and maidens to the palace hie,
To hail the dawn of beams, almost as bright,
Which, in his earthly halls, shall blaze that night.

Now, kindling at each word, an anxious sire,
Join'd by his gentle ward, would oft inquire—
Fill'd with the luxury of pleasing pain—
About the wars,—would ask and ask again.
And as Fazello every scene display'd,
The maiden's spirit with his spirit stray'd.

And as each chance and change of seas and isles
 His mind revisited, to count the wiles,
 The stratagems of strife, by land and ship,
 She caught his meaning ere it left his lip.
 Thus was the stranger courted day by day,
 Yet oftentimes, unwatch'd, would steal away,—
 Would steal away from them for hours and hours,
 To wander through the chosen walks and bowers
 He lov'd in childhood; where each challeng'd
 scent

Brought earlier pleasures, touch'd with sentiment.
 He thought upon that time, when what we
 view

Startles the new heart with enchantments new ;
 That fairy time when, yet uncurs'd by skill,
 What we view not is more enchanting still ;
 And oh ! the tinkling of the convent bell
 Ne'er on his ear so exquisitely fell ;
 For though its voice was still the voice of yore,
 It now a language of expression bore !
 Sense,—soul was feasted ; yet he felt a want,
 Nor was it strange, he did not vainly pant

For more,—he had too much,—but sigh'd to part,
With some one else, the banquet of his heart.
At length, the thought of Gelardoni came,
And fix'd, at once, his yearning spirits' aim.
He turn'd him back,—his eye still downward
bent,

Which still saw not the sunny path it went,
Till, lifted by surprise, while round him falls
The evening shadow from the palace walls,
Amazement sparkles in that eye, to see
The dear desir'd one in her balcony.
He kiss'd his hand to her, and mark'd—the while
His sweet salute was answer'd by a smile—
Upon her cheek a red, resistless flush,
And felt o'er his, too, an unbidden blush.
The ardour of his soul to fear had grown,
Love said 'twas crime to court her to come down;
So, with a wayward heart, he went his way,
In vain regrets to while the weary day.

And now the sun-beams of the third day die,
And knights and maidens to the palace hie;

And now, in flowing tides of golden state,
Crowds—crowds are pouring through the fortress'
gate.

Now o'er a path of scatter'd flowers they stray—
Flowers that sigh forth a welcome all the way—
Through courts—arcades,—still by that path led on—
'Till, pass'd the stairs, they greet the grand saloon:
Where that fine element, which subtly sleeps
In every earthly thing, awaken'd leaps,
In thousand lights, as if by magic stroke,
In every place, some clouding spell had broke ;—
But words are weak to picture e'en a gleam
Of charms, that seem as ravish'd in some dream
From fancy's exquisite aërial halls,
To grace all palpably earth's dingy walls ;
And weaker still, to paint those lovelier sights,—
Those moving multitudes of gallant knights,
And ladies fair, whose gold and gems reflect
The midnight noon, with which the roofs are deckt ;
Nay, more,—whose heavenlier selves so brightly
glow,
They make a starry firmament below.

And e'en those little satellites, which play
By princely orbs, to prove their prouder ray,
Are veil'd not now ; the favour of this night
Fondly revealing the most feeble light.
But there was one, whose brilliancy alone
Diffus'd that hue on others, first its own ;—
A moon, which had the solar influence stole,
To gild the planets which around it roll ;
Whose wealth of radiance grew more rich, more
 bright,
How prodigal soe'er it spent its light :
'Twas Gelardoni ! and a hallowing fear
Long kept her lover from approaching near.
At length they met, unconseious, in the crowd ;
Their eyes went down — their mutual blushes
 glow'd :
He touch'd her hand—she look'd, and, with alarm
Unknown before, she found her passive arm
Link'd within his ;—but wherefore, when, or how—
And yet it linger'd there—she did not know.
But now, behold ! with gesture and with glance
Of eager grace, he woos her to the dance ;

He leads her forth, and as she joins the train,
The clarions shout in such a thrilling strain,
That, like a mock-star's momentary fire,
Her heart's excess had flash'd but to expire,
Had not Fazello, her attendant sprite,
Upheld and whirled her round her track of light.
They sail the air,—ascend from earth's abodes,
On clouds of bliss,—themselves as light as clouds,—
Float like the partner-pinions of one dove,
And, as they move, around them seems to move
A circling sky of visionary sights,—
Of soft, celestial, blending looks and lights.
They part,—they meet,—so delicate his touch,—
His spirit trembled, lest 'twould dare too much ;
And yet that touch—as summer's lightest breeze
O'er foliage—wakes the loveliest harmonies.
Again they part,—and to each dying maid
The dear perfection of his form's display'd ;
At every turn, some latent graces 'scape
To wanton o'er the movements of his shape ;
And as each change of symmetry is shown,
She once forgets to plume her on her own.

Meantime, amid a maze of female charms,
That ev'ry breast with tender pleasure warms,
Fair Gelardoni's form each rival mars ;—
A pearl to pebbles,—moon to misty stars.

The dance is o'er,—as if on fairy shores,
Beauty's impassion'd worshipper implores
The heavens, that his idolatry may reach
Its deity, without the aid of speech,—
May pour out orisons, by feeling wrought
To poetry, without the pain of thought.
And when, through modest lids, her eyes would
rove,

He fancied, by their stealthy looks, she strove
To tell him that she saw the love he bore
Her blushing charms, and long'd to make it more.
But busy dreamers ! they, at length, must part,
Each in the silent fullness of the heart.
The feast is o'er,—no more are lips and eyes
Illum'd by love, or lur'd by luxuries ;
The dying lamps grow dull against the walls,—
Few lords still loiter in the spacious halls ;

The palace, late so beautiful—so bright,
 No longer shines with loveliness and light ;
 Each guest hath vanish'd, wan'd each gorgeous beam,
 And past is that bright pageant like a dream.

All, all is still,—the melancholy moon,
 Pale and compos'd, hath pass'd her peerless noon ;
 The sleep of night, alarm'd not by one breath,
 In all, but light and beauty, looks like death.
 No vapour sullies yonder placid heaven,—
 No whisper by the wandering air is given,—
 No bird of song the silence dares to break,—
 No zephyr stirs the smoothness of the lake,—
 No sigh disturbs the aspen's wondrous ease,—
 Even the filmy gossamer's at peace.
 Sleep lulls each form—each sublunary spot ;
 But love, alas ! young love, alone, sleeps not !
 There, in that bower, where scent with moonbeams
 weaves
 Its tranquillizing charm,—where light and leaves
 Slumber together ;—in that bed of rest
 Commotions wake, which may not be exprest ;—

There, in that halcyon balcony, reclin'd,
The enamour'd soul of Gelardoni pin'd.
She gaz'd by turns, unmindful of their worth,
Upon the rays of heaven—the tints of earth ;
For, fix'd on inward dreams, her spiritual eye
Forsakes the meaner spells of land and sky.
What, though yon orb's a diamond to the sight,—
Yon arch around, a cave of chrysolite,—
Yon full-blown garden shrubs, a blushing grove,
Softened in beauty by the lamp above ;
What, though the green lawn as an ocean smiles
Round beds of little fairy flowering isles,—
Those bright imaginings of nature's mind,
By this enchanting atmosphere refin'd,
Unheeded, through the dreamer's senses, dart,
Lost in the brighter visions of her heart,—
Visions which clothe their idol in each guise,
He e'er had shone before her thoughts or eyes.

'Tis almost morn,—by drowsy languor led,
She seeks to gain the quiet of her bed ;

There, worn by thought, her weary eyelids close,
And, as uncertain slumber comes and goes,
Her senses feel the rising tide of sleep,
Like shells, by weeds, suspended o'er the deep ;
Till, from each waking tie, unconscious freed,
Like those light shells, from each supporting weed.
Her senses gently launch into a sea
Of sweet oblivion and tranquillity.

Now, to some stealing melody, she wakes,
Believing, still, 'tis but a dream that breaks
Her peaceful slumbers, as the moonlight sky
Peeps through the curtains, on her opening eye :
She gazes, listens ;—fancies that she hears
The mild, harmonious breathing of the spheres ;
No,—'tis Fazello, he whom now she loves,
Warbling his passion to the echoing groves.
She knows his voice, and, raptur'd by the lay,
Still clings the fonder, as it dies away :
She holds her breath—and, now the strain is
gone,
Almost expires with its expiring tone.

By silence rous'd, scarce conscious where she
goes,

From her warm couch the enamour'd virgin rose,
To seek the charm which stole upon her rest ;
And, flinging round her shrinking form a vest,
She reach'd the window ;—but her courage fail'd,
And in its curtain-folds her charms she veil'd:

Then trembling, thought,—“ How dare I meet his
sight,

“ While thus the moon pours forth this flood of
light ?

“ 'Tis wrong—I know it is ;—and yet,—no ;—still

“ How weakly reason stems the tide of will ;

“ I yield—I come !”—The curtain she undraws ;

And, like a blush-rose in a marble vase,

With crimson cheek leans o'er the balcony,

Her serenader's gallant shape to see.

She saw him not ; she cried, “ 'Tis vain to look—

“ Would I had flown the moment that I woke !”

Then gaz'd with anxious eye, 'till, growing dim,

'Twas mock'd by hundred shapes, instead of him :

And list'ning, each light air, just born to cease,
But sham'd her with self-requiems of peace.
“ Yes, he is gone,” she sigh'd, “ or why delay
“ To meet the simple maid, who owns he may ?”
Perplex'd a moment, 'gainst her throbbing brow
She press'd her feverish palm ; but rising, now
Bethought her,—“ Wherefore grieve I at his flight ?
“ For, had he spoken, I had sank with fright.
“ And now, methinks, his wakeful eye and ear
“ Might be on watch, while late I loiter'd here.”
Then, fearing he would come,—no, no,—would not,
She sigh'd,—she left the dear—the dangerous spot.

In earlier days, when feeling long'd for love,
She fancied that 'twould nought but pleasure prove :
But now 'tis born, 'tis nurs'd with weeping eyes,
With wearying hopes, and half-despairing sighs,
The mother's fond anxiety—who rears
A sickly infant—racks her heart with fears ;
Yet, so much dotes she on her cause of grief,
She would not have it die, though 'twere relief.



CANTO III.

THE dreams of night have vanish'd ; now arise,
More dream-like far, day's wild realities.
The palace wakes ; and Petoletti views
The rushing tide of life, in tell-tale hues,
On Gelardoni's and Fazello's cheeks,
While, backward, his, its tronbled fountain seeks ;
The vital tint upon his visage flies
As fades the serpent's colour, ere it dies.
He read the passion, in their looks reveal'd,
Which would not speak, yet could not be conceal'd :
His humour was the wildness of the wind,
No power could fathom it, no spell could bind,

Now this, now that way ; ah ! whate'er were thrown
Athwart its course, might reach the pole or zone.
And lo ! Fazello hath its fury met,
Bidden to tend him in his cabinet ;
Where, bursting forth anew, that mood commands
The youth again to range o'er foreign lands.
Soon as the first cold shudder of surprise
Had fled his frame, love's hapless victim cries,
“ I need not tell thee my allegiance knows
“ That none thy sovereign pleasure may oppose,
“ Much less myself ; yet, pardon me, I dare
“ Humbly to hope, when thou shalt hear the prayer,
“ Which pleads my late, long exile from my home,
“ O'er isles and seas, which thou hadst bade me
 roam,—
“ The toils, the wounds, these limbs have borne afar,
“ Hunted, and hunting in a savage war,—
“ Thou wilt of thy poor son and slave require
“ The dearer task to guard his lord and sire.”

“ Is this, vain babbler ! all thy wily art
“ Can urge to change the purpose of my heart ?”

“ Yes, this is all my wily art can prove,
 “ For I confess me I have wrong’d thy love,
 “ And merit well the taunting of thy soul,
 “ Because I fear’d to frankly tell the whole.”

“ Unmask thy meaning—what dost thou conceal?”

“ Then didst thou but imagine what I feel—
 “ A heart like mine thou could’st not doom to rove—
 “ Know’st thou not Gelardoni? Sire, I love.”

’Twas what the questioner dreaded ; and his dread
 Made him less fit to bear it, when ’twas said.
 Life’s fitful stream, which late would proudly mount,
 Once more falls backward to its troubled fount ;
 But soon—as though ’twere strengthen’d by that
 flight—

Again it flows with more than spring-tide might ;
 Against its farthest boundaries—struggles—storms,
 Beats—bubbles—foams, and every part deforms :
 In multitudinous confusion start
 Frowns, bursting looks, and bitter smiles of heart,

While speech, in broken accents, can but say,
By rapid turns, "tormentor," and "away."

"Nay, frown not, Sire ; I flatter me, the tone
"Of my fond heart is echoed by her own,
"All soften'd and subdued ; or else, perchance,
"I hear my heart's vibrations in a trance,
"And deem them her's ; do thou then find
"If truth or fancy thus enchant my mind ;
"And if, from bashful maidenhood, thy power
"Can win the wish'd confession, from that hour,
"My heart were lighter ; let me this but know,
"And hear her vows, then will I freely go."

Who else but Petoletti, when the wound
Was prob'd, and prob'd thus sorely, had not swoon'd ?
He clench'd his teeth, he check'd his hurried pace,
He stood with horror quivering in his face ;
The rage within so shaking life's frail wall,
If thus confin'd, the fabric soon must fall :
But, through his parch'd lips' death-like portal, came
The bursting fury of the internal flame,

And still he lives ;—behold ! his sallow cheeks
Regain their swarthy tint ; he breathes—he speaks :—

“ Deem’st thou that I—her foster-sire—will be
“ Thy young heart’s pander ? Rather hope to see
“ The lion cater for the jackal,—hence !
“ Thou shalt not touch her virgin innocence.
“ Think on thy years, thou green, untoward boy ;
“ Then think on her’s—the peace thou might’st de-
stroy,—

“ I tell thee that those dewy lips, that pout
“ With morning’s freshness, shall not feel the drought
“ Of withering passion ; no ! not e’en for thee—
“ Nay, hence ! I will not hear—forget and flee.”

“ O, I can ne’er forget, ne’er sojourn hence,
“ While, o’er my heav’n of love, unmov’d suspense
“ Hangs like a vapour ; let this fleet, or burst,
“ Then will I speed me, blessed or accurst ;
“ For should it burst in lightnings of despair,
“ What boots it whether I be here or there ;
“ But should that lingering vapour fleet away,
“ Chas’d by her smiles, a sweet, consoling ray

“ Would reach this heart, would dissipate its gloom,
“ And cheer my steps wherever they might roam.”

“ Hold ! driveller, hold ! I charge thee, cease that
strain

“ Of doting raptures—dreamer ! ’tis in vain.

“ Nay, look not thus, presumptuous stripling, since

“ Thy will hath warr’d against thy sire and prince.

“ Thou canst not, mighty conqueror ! me beguile,—

“ Go, vanquish silly maidens with thy smile ;

“ Would’st thou renounce—vain renegade, beware !—

“ My mandate for a fancy light as air ?

“ What ! said I light as air ? give back that word !—

“ ’Tis guilt—rebellion—treason to thy lord !”—

The wilder’d youth, whose mind in reveries dwelt

Of wondering fear, before the despot knelt.

“ Still here ? an injur’d parent’s curse be on

“ Thy head, undutiful—ungrateful son !”

Then, spent the bitterness of soul in speech,

Or feeling what no words could ever reach,

One hand shut from his eyes the light of day,

The other shook him, as a snake, away.

The pleader, finding that, if still he sued,
His warmth were but as fire to fever's blood,
Exclaim'd, "Then let my heart's desire but earn
"The blessing of a sire, on my return,
"And, call me not undutiful, O, no,
"I will, where'er thy pleasure bids me, go."
Then, while a change his watchful gaze discern'd,
He dar'd to touch the palm against him turn'd,
Which, even in the posture which repell'd,
Was stretch'd out still; and strange! 'twas not withheld.
Cheer'd by that sign, his hopes regain'd their life,
He kiss'd it—'twas the lamb that lick'd the knife!
For, o'er the tyrant, as he touch'd his palm,
A deadly thought had brought a deadly calm;
He deem'd a ready method he had found
To rid him of his rival,—turn'd around,
And breath'd, in tones whose music but entic'd
The unconscious victim to be sacrific'd,
"My son! thy prompt obedience wins my heart—
"Thy pardon take—but, still thou must depart."

Left by himself, the lover tried in vain
To trace the source of that tempestuous strain.

Night came, and he was calm: but when he watch'd
A secret courier from the halls despatch'd,
He deem'd the parting moment might be near,
And press'd his couch as sad as 'twere his bier.
Morn beam'd; he rose—the gardens sought; to
calm

His ever-rising feelings with their balm;
Where, faint in mind and frame, all wearily
He stretch'd his limbs beneath a shadowing tree.

Meantime, the courier an assassin brought,
Willing to act the Prince's deadly thought;
But Petoletti ponder'd,—might relent
Ere yet his tongue confirm'd his dread intent.
Musing, he wander'd, heedless where he stray'd,
Until he saw his spirit-ruling maid:
She rose, in sweet confusion, and retir'd
With smiles that all his former purpose fir'd;
With smiles that seem'd some promise to impart,
But for the rival who possess'd her heart;
With smiles whose beauty—though so fit to still
Man's angry passions—fix'd his wavering will.

Then turn'd he where his dark accomplice stood,
 And softly whisper'd, to that man of blood,
 "Come hither, Fiocatti!—lend thine ear!"—
 Then led him to an open casement near—
 "Beneath yon tree, behold that loathsome sight!
 "To-morrow—mark me—at the fall of night,
 "His journeying will pursue the path which fills
 "Travellers with terror, as beyond the hills
 "It winds into the wood—just by that tomb
 "Which tells a tale—and may another—Come,
 "Thou know'st my meaning, and will still be true—
 "With but one useful page, thine eye shall view
 "The tempting sight of his unguarded breast;
 "Thou know'st thy trade—I need not name the rest.
 "Why pause? why marvel? dost not understand?
 "I wish him gone—come, give me, friend, thy hand?
 "In thy safe keeping no mischance will curse,
 "Thou hast a ready Band, and I—a purse."
 He ceas'd;—the grasp of hands,—the answer'd nod
 Of mutual trust, then seal'd the bond of blood:
 One to his closet crept, while in far bowers
 The other sought his murder-working powers.

Still underneath the sycamore's broad spray,
Listless, the lamb mark'd out for slaughter lay,
Till rest gave thought, and restless thought,
again

By wandering, strove to wander from its pain.
He left the lawns, walk'd where around him
wove

The dark green orangery's glossy grove ;
But pass'd the spot, and did not once behold
Its silver blooms or pensile fruits of gold.
E'en flow'rets, fit to deck the dress of morn,—
Finely wrought draperies fit but to be worn
By nature in her summer holidays,—
But float before him as a misty maze ;
Till, waken'd by some insect's quivering wings,—
Some creature's drowsy hum, who sips and sings,
Couch'd in a lily's cup, he turn'd and sigh'd,
With plaintive voice and spirit mortified,—
“ This garden's store of sweets, thou tiny bee,
“ All, all is thine, it blooms not now for me :
“ Could I, like thee, the honey of this spot—
“ My home—enjoy, how happy were my lot :

“ Did but that lady, whom my fancy loves,
 “ Smile on her slave, in these delicious groves,
 “ For ever,—ay, for ever,—could I stay,
 “ And waste my life in luxury away.
 “ I list not that she loves me ; yet too well
 “ List I, that here no longer must I dwell,
 “ To spread the figur’d volume of my days,—
 “ Its lights and shades, at leisure, for her gaze,
 “ Nor breathe my thoughts, my feelings, as they
 rise,
 “ To catch her young, awakening sympathies.”
 Then, turning to a small pavilion nigh,
 To veil his pensiveness from vulgar eye,
 Soon as its porch was enter’d, he survey’d
 Sweet traces of his dear, adored maid,—
 A pencil, lute, and book ! and thither sprung
 To rashly throw himself the couch along :
 Faulty in this, more faulty still, he took
 The volume,—ventur’d in its leaves to look :
 But what the warmth,—the flutter through each
 limb,
 To find, reveal’d in song, her love for him ?

He read,—he read again ;—that verse had charm'd
His every sense ;—till, at some step alarm'd,
His eye, in greater fascination, fell
Upon the fair enchantress of the spell.
Downward she cast her gaze, and, faint with fears,
Essay'd to speak, but melted into tears :
And though her feet had sought him through the
day,
Now would she give a world were she away :
And yet she stood, reclining like a flower,
Rooted to earth, and drooping in the shower :
He rais'd her beauties, and the weeping dew
Of sensibility, when shaken, threw
More sweetness forth ;—but “ Chase away that tear,”
He whisper'd tenderly, “ Nay, do not fear.”

“ No, I do not :” she falter'd, and the beat
Of her heart's pulses made her voice so sweet
It seem'd a seraph's. “ No,”—she fainter cried,—
And on that word the failing accent died ;
Trembling, she linger'd, till she lost the pow'r,
Ay, and the late desire to leave the bow'r.

Now, growing bold, he press'd her still to stay ;
 What though she show'd no wish to turn away :
 Then, holding in her sight the magic book,
 Gave such a playful smile and winning look,
 That pleas'd—confus'd, delighted, but distress,
 She veil'd the tell-tale volume in her vest.
 And bolder now, his lip was fain to speak
 The secret which, from her's, as fain would break :
 But each was dumb ; still it was told to both :—
 Was it not told, when his fond eye was loth
 To leave her fonder eye ?—when either view'd
 The other's brightness by a tear bedew'd ?—
 When hands would, by their delicate caress,
 Ardour, yet innocence of heart express ?
 Though tongues were mute, could language plainer
 teach
 The kindred feeling ?—that was passion's speech !

 How blissful—but how brief—was their delight ;
 A breath had pow'r to put the spell to flight.
 Madly he cried—as sudden, o'er his heart,
 Rememb'rance came—" 'Tis fix'd, and we must part."

She heard no more ; that agonizing speech
Had scar'd her senses far beyond the reach
Of further accent ; in his arms she lay—
A monument of feeling pass'd away.

Quick from her face the shadowing locks he threw,
And looking on each thin lid, vein'd with blue,
Which hid the light of all his hopes—exclaim'd
“ What have I done?—that heedless speech hath
aim'd

“ Death at her timid heart?”—She breath'd, she
mov'd,—

The lid was gently rais'd—the wild eye rov'd ;—
And soon its heaven of light, with torrents dim,
Repos'd, in melting languor, upon him.

Feebly she cried, “ Alas ! thou break'st my heart,—
“ What—what is fix'd,—and wherefore must we part ?
“ Hast thou to some far lovelier maiden given
“ Thy plighted troth?—hath some rash vow to
heaven—”

“ No, dearest ! no ; nor can there witchery be,
“ In earth or heaven, to charm my soul from thee :

“ Yet I must go.”

“ Go ! whither ?”

“ —’ Tis a grief

“ I fain would spare thee ; but my sire and chief

“ Again hath bade me leave my native hall,

“ My land, my home, and thee more dear than all.”

With feeling’s true perversity of will—

Thus doom’d to sever—they grew fonder still ;

And early passion, which had else been coy,

In sorrow open’d a new source of joy.

Morn,—mid-day past ; still came there no reprieve ;

Fazello now his home—his love—must leave :

That mutual, melancholy joy is o’er,—

And mingled sympathy must flow no more.

The courser waits, whose fleetness will convey

A doting heart, from all it loves, away.

And Petoletti shuns the last adieu ;

While thus the lovers deem he strives to shew

His resolution,—and regret, to part ;

His feeling—and his fortitude of heart.

And now Clotilla, the appointed page,
To tend the young lord on his pilgrimage,
While in the halls his master lingers yet—
Is summon'd to his sovereign's cabinet.—
Is it to take some token, which may prove
A prince's pardon, or a parent's love?
No,—'tis within his treacherous breast to bear
The plan, to lead him to the fatal snare !

Poor Gelardoni's passion-captur'd heart
Grew frantic when the moment came to part ;
The while her lover, to console her, cried—
Feeling more deeply what he strove to hide—
“ Nay, let me see thee calmer, ere I range ;—
“ Come,—bend we to the doom, we cannot change !
“ We yet may meet again.”—
“ No : hadst thou said
“ We shall, I had not trembled with such dread.”
“ Well, then, we shall ; let come what may, I will—”
“ Hold ! thou but strivest, with false hopes, to still

“ This beating heart,—thy flatteries are in vain !—

“ It throbs, as though we ne’er should meet again.”

He clasp’d her in his arms, and sealing fast

His lips to her’s, still lingering, gave that last—

Last signet of the truth he could not say,

And, chok’d with anguish, tore himself away ;—

“ Stay! one word more!” she scream’d; but her wild
cry

And wilder glance, nor reach’d his ear, nor eye.

The youth was gone ; and seeing now no trace

Of comfort left, she hid her sorrowing face.

Still one poor hope remain’d—again she rais’d

Her drooping lids, and o’er the landscape gaz’d—

“ How is it with these eyes?—ha ! do I see,

“ Or only dream?—O ! yes, indeed, ’tis he !”

Dear as departing day, she view’d him now

Shine on the hill—now vanish o’er its brow,

And when the dazzling sight no longer beam’d

Upon her eyes, their aching vision seem’d

O’ercast with dimness, and the prospect made—

However bright before—a place of shade :

She had been gazing on a sun, whose flight
Had left her senses in a mental night.

'Twould seem that youthful exile was a thing
Predestin'd to perpetual wandering ;
A heart to which the magic touch of home
Prov'd but a shock, again to make it roam ;
A weary bark, flung by the tide ashore,
Wash'd back by reflux waves, and seen no more.

CANTO IV.

RACK'D by his guilty fears—more keenly rack'd,
As yet uncertain of the deadly act—
The Prince exclaim'd, “ Ye balmy groves, but give
“ My brain forgetfulness, and I shall live—
“ Shall gather hope—What hope is there for me?
“ That thought of blood will never cease to be.
“ Were memory gone, still o'er my heart would
 come
“ A nameless sense of never-ceasing gloom.
“ Yet, of his victim, death might be despoil'd—
“ What then? my crime were known—my purpose
 foil'd.

“ But ’tis not so,—what demons seem to run
“ About my path, to whisper ‘ It is done.’
Then fear’d he—shunn’d he—every neighbouring eye,
Lest, by his look, it should his guilt descry.
The very dappled animal that walks
The woods and wilds, where spectre-like he stalks,
Appears to him instinctively to see
The monstrous secret of his guilt, and flee.
He rais’d his hands, they battled with the wind,
To beat the dragon, Conscience, from his mind—
He turn’d—he reach’d the hall—the chamber too,
Where sate that maiden, in whose presence grew
His only hope ;—but, with that hope—the thought
As quickly came, how dearly it was bought :
Thus, while his heart was cheer’d, a sting was there
Which render’d hope companion to despair.
He tried to smile—to speak—yet vainly tried,—
Could only sink exhausted at her side,
And greet her with one long—one listless gaze :
“ Alas !” she question’d, with a sweet amaze,
“ What makes thee look so tremulous and pale ?
“ Art thou a-weary ?—hath the mountain gale

“ Thus scath'd thy form ? but wherefore so distress ? ”

His lip was mov'd, yet mute—he smote his breast.

“ Thy pain is there, then ;—would that I could weep

“ Balm on its anguish ! but, perchance, some sleep—”

Sleep !—at that word, the mute lip, lately curl'd,

Broke to a laugh which seem'd not of this world.

“ Sleep ! peerless innocence ! oh ! no, no, no,—

“ Thou little know'st the secret of my woe,

“ What have I said ? why start'st thou ? can'st thou
see,

“ Upon my face, aught more than misery ? ”

“ Thou can'st not—can'st thou ? ” Even while he
speaks

A freezing sense of guilt creeps o'er his cheeks.

“ What frenzy's this ?—I list not what I say,—

“ My mind is wandering,—but away—away,

Ye meddling shades of fancy ! ”,—and he wakes,

That moment, to the distant view, that breaks

In beauty, through the porch, upon his gaze.

“ Behold yon scene—where'er thy vision stays,

“ O'er mount or meadow, wood or wave, it meets

“ A wilderness of wonders,—waste of sweets ;

“ But what their golden fruits,—their fields of health,
“ Their marble quarries, and their mines of wealth,
“ To this fair spot, protected by yon wall
“ Of ancient strength,—’tis richer than them all ;
“ Yes, this,—those also”—twining, like the asp,
Around her form, his softly-stealing clasp,—
“ Yes, this,— those also, ay, all, all are thine,
“ If what this arm encircles may be mine.
“ Thou scornest?—Nay, ’tis not this tempting tale
“ That ought on thy pure feelings to prevail :
“ Nor need I tell thee of each day and night
“ I’ve spent in weaving spells for thy delight ;
“ For thou hast had the fruits : I would but prove
“ How much I suffer, and how much I love.”

She had been taught by habitude to feel
A child’s devotion, and a daughter’s zeal,
Then how endure a father at her foot,
And yet remain so motionless and mute ?
She would have rais’d him, but had not the power
Of tongue, or action, in that dream-like hour.
She felt as oft hath felt the slumberer,—
More than awake, but could nor speak nor stir.

“ Raise but those eyes,” he sigh’d, “ and shed one ray
 “ To chase this midnight from the blaze of day ;
 “ Breathe but one word to break this mockery
 “ Of mine own voice, whatever it may be.”

She put aside her curls, as if that mien
 Of heedlessness her wild alarm could screen,
 And cried, with faltering voice and starting tears,
 That half confess’d and half conceal’d her fears,—
 “ The movements of my lips were wont to show
 “ The motions of my soul—so shall they now ;
 “ And yet, methinks, ’twere needless ; prithee, ask
 “ Thyself, nor put me to the piteous task.
 “ Thou must have mark’d ——” she sigh’d, look’d
 down, and ceas’d—

“ What ! hath some daring reveller at the feast,
 “ By holiday demeanour,—simple child !
 “ And holiday habiliments, beguil’d
 “ Thy fancy with false shows as little worth
 “ Thy heeding as the hour that gave it birth ?”

“ ’Twas at the feast I first ador’d that youth !—
“ Nor can I ever—ever doubt his truth.”

“ Peace ! let not rhapsodies like these inflame
“ My rising anger, but reveal his name.
“ Was it Fazello, then, who gain’d from thee
“ The heart’s best favor ?

“ Ay, in sooth, ’twas he !

“ But, O ! my lord, in pity, cease this strain ;
“ And, as thou lov’st me, leave me once again
“ To calm the tremor which, through ev’ry sense,
“ Alas ! unfits me for this conference.”
Forthwith, from pity or less pure intent,
He left her, and she bles’d him as he went.
Well might she fancy how unfit was he
To live with her in links of sympathy,
For, like an evil spirit, in the hour
Of ghostly midnight, he would leave his bower,
The tombs of past humanity to tread,
Perchance, for awful converse with the dead ;

Or rob his spirit of repose, to pore
 O'er mystic scrolls and cabalistic lore.
 Or, when the sky was reft of every spark,
 And earth, a gloomy waste without a mark,—
 When goats and goatherds to their folds would
 creep,

And peasant boys were lapp'd in luscious sleep,—
 Would fly into the hills,—would speed afar,—
 The lightning's flash his only leading star ;
 Or when the wonted slumbers of the lake
 In storms, would, like a little ocean, wake,
 With foot of frenzy to his boat would roam,
 And dart, enraptur'd, through its angry foam.

Brief time had fled, when a peasant view'd
 A startling scene of mysteries, in the wood.
 The soil was mark'd with hoof-prints, and with gore,
 The foliage, grass, and moss, were sprinkled o'er ;
 A faulchion, too—and many a sliver'd spray,
 Among the nettles and the blue-bells lay.
 Fearing, he fled ; but the defile he took,
 Led to the scene his steps had fain forsook ;

And what a scene was that of blood and scath !
A lifeless courser choak'd the narrow path.
His noble chest gap'd with a ghastly wound ;
His stately head was stretch'd along the ground :
No more that flaccid neck in haughtiness,
Would curvet at the cavalier's caress ;
No more—now stiff with many a gory stain—
Would flutter, on the wind, his flowing mane ;
The wide-extended nostril—nerveless tongue—
Pain-started eye-ball—lip, that loosely hung,—
Left but a ruin of that graceful mould,
Whose every pace 'twas rapture to behold.
When curious thoughts had conquer'd earlier fear,
The peasant to the spectacle drew near ;
And shuddering cried, “ These haunches seem to show,
“ Thus mangled, — that 'twas treachery gave the
blow.”

Then tears of pity and of scorn were shed
From eyes, which had, from childhood, lov'd a
steed :

And straight he fled, till Petoletti's fort
Allur'd his quickening footsteps to its court.

He told his story, and some slaves were sent,
 To put to proof the tale of wonderment.
 'Twas Petoletti's will :—but whence that will ?
 Did it originate in good or ill ?
 In hope the victim had escap'd the blow
 In evil hour decreed,—repented now ?
 Or fear that treachery's want of strength or skill,
 Had left some wreck of life, to thwart him still ?
 None knew ; but, 'twas his mandate,—they are gone,—
 And he is left to meditate alone.

The slaves return ;—it was the favorite steed
 Of Lord Fazello ; but, although no speed
 Was spar'd, to search the forest leagues around,
 Nor dead, nor living, was its master found.
 They mark'd nought else, in that bewildering wood,
 Than, from the horse, a long faint trail of blood ;
 This track'd they to a cavern's yawning brink,
 Upon whose giddy verge they paus'd to think—
 While from their brows burst sweat-drops of de-
 spair,—
 That many murders might lay hidden there.

Lacks there a stamp to prove the wanderer's fate?
Behold his lordless page is at the gate—
Who 'scap'd the strife in which his master fell,
Had straight return'd the horrid tale to tell.

Though Gelardoni knows not all, she hears
Enough to fill a woman's mind with fears;
Hints of the secret, which escap'd from those
Who could not keep it, yet would not disclose:
Some ill had chanc'd, they had not quite reveal'd;
Dire what they told, more dire what they conceal'd.
How great her anguish, when so much she knows,
And yet knows not the measure of her woes!
Alas! that limitless excess to bear,
Is living anguish, worse than lost despair!
Poor mourner! left all lone and comfortless,
No friend to share the load of her distress;
She muses—loves it—waits for further woe;
Nor waits in vain,—she meets a deadlier blow;
The murmur'd rumour of a scene of blood,
Discover'd o'er the mountain, in the wood.
She hears,—she feels; she turns,—her eyes engage
Her lost Fazello's lone and lordless page!

The Prince his chamber left, one starlight hour,
To seek his Gelardoni's chosen tower ;
But, ravish'd by the lights above him, stay'd
To scan them from a lofty colonnade.
And as he gaz'd, imagination's dream
Made all those clear, unclouded splendours seem
Transparent openings, in the arch of heav'n,
Which show'd the pure bright light he fancied giv'n
To realms no earthly creature could explore,
Where virtue reign'd, he thought, for evermore.
He turn'd his gaze in anguish to the sky,
Which shone so mildly on his maniac eye ;
Then turn'd it thence, and wrapp'd his darksome vest
Intensely round his still more darksome breast.
Then rose the half-spent moon ; and, as it rose,
In tranquil guise,--more troublous grew his woes.
What though those beams to innocence would come,
As kindred boons, his soul were more at home
In storms and darkness ;--beauties which would
 bless
A mind at peace,---but mock'd his wretchedness.

Now mus'd he on the tales of olden time,
Which tell of forms that haunt the man of crime,
Some retributive penance to require,
Though sunk in ocean, or consum'd in fire.
He mus'd in silence, till a dead branch dropp'd,
Which, rattling through the living foliage, stopp'd
Mute on the leaves below ;—alarm'd—amaz'd,—
Caught by that sound, the trembling culprit gaz'd,
And deem'd he saw Fazello's figure move
Among the shadows of the poplar grove ;
Or was it fancy ? Did a breath assail
His senses then,—each quivering nerve would quail.
He mark'd the figure, from the leafy gloom,
Steal through the moonlight,—near the terrace
come.
It mov'd—it paus'd—it look'd !—The groves—the
ground—
The terrace — mountains — lake — seem'd whirling
round ;
A sudden darkness fell o'er nature's face,
Veiling, in solemn shade, each former trace ;

He strove to call, but could not,—terrified,—
His temples throb'd,—heart wildly smote his
side,—

Ears rang with sounds of horror,—eyesight fled,
And, failing in each nerve, he sank as dead.

And still as dead lay senseless till a train
Of slaves recall'd him into life again.

His mind, at first, by nameless gloom o'ercast,

Soon runs o'er recollections of the past ;

And, lo ! the vision of the garden, o'er

His every thought, reigns powerful as before.

Arous'd, at length, the sternness of his eye

Appears to question of his vassals why

They linger there—but scarcely have they caught

That meaning look, when it is lost in thought.

Again it starts,—he motions with his hand,

And in his presence they no longer stand.

What form approaches now—what beast of blood ?

'Tis Fiocatti,—king-wolf of the wood !

Soon as he comes, the Prince, with one fix'd glance,

Freezes the speech that strives for utterance ;

Then leads,—commanding silence as they crawl,—
By torch-light, to a long-neglected hall ;
Where, casting off the fear that knit his brow,
“ Here,” he exclaims, “ thy speech may freely flow.
“ Say ? is it done ?”

“ It is.”

“ Nay, speak thee out !

“ Say, what is done ? for I would have no doubt
“ Obscure thy tidings,—art thou sure my son
“ Was slain, as I design’d ?”

“ That deed is done.”

Scarce hath he spoken, when, alarm’d, they hear
A rustling noise amongst the tapestry near,—
Quick yells the one, with rage that fear had giv’n,
“ Hence ! or I’ll slay thee, though thou be from
heav’n !”

Meanwhile, the other—musing on that sight
Which, in the garden, smote his soul with fright—
Seiz’d his accomplice, with a desperate grasp,
And check’d his deadly sword-swoop by that clasp.

The curtain parting now, no longer hides
The hidden mystery ;—a figure glides
From thence,—however dark, or darkly seen,—
Before their senses, with Fazello's mien :
And, while their limbs are fetter'd by amaze,
The appalling shape departs before their gaze.

Mute,—motionless,—each human monster stood,
More struck by what they felt than what they view'd,
Until that form no more could be discern'd ;
Then, weak as woman, Petoletti turn'd,
In helpless anguish, to the bandit-chief ;
To lead him to his chamber, for relief :
Where, gathering hardihood, he cried “ Begone,
“ And bid Clotilla wait on me anon,
“ Nor take thou, from these palace-walls, thy flight,
“ Till further quest explain this fearful sight.”



CANTO V.

MEANTIME ; soon as the lordless page had 'reft
Each lingering hope to Gelardoni left,
She sought her chosen tower, and sate her there
In all the dreadful calmness of despair.
Rising, at length, her silent lute she took—
Silent till then, since love had round her woke
A sweeter music—and, to court relief,
Touch'd the sole plaything of a heart in grief.
But as her fingers idled o'er the string,
In other dreams her mind was wandering ;
First came the startling sense of being lone,
Then rose the feeling that her love was gone ;
And fancy spread in visions, dear, though dim,
Those hours of dalliance she had pass'd with him ;

While music—though unmark'd—would subtly roll,
To touch more deeply her distracted soul :—
It was too much—the melody was stopp'd—
The hand was still—the trembling lute was dropp'd.
“ Would that the dead,” she frantic cried, “ might
come

“ Back from the grave !—would that my lover's tomb
“ Might break, and let me gaze upon his ghost ;
“ What though my reason—or my life—were lost !”
She wept, and through her tears, o'erwhelm'd with
awe,

Her lover's form as in a vision saw—
And, reeling at the sight, that moment found
The figure's arm her fainting frame around.
Chill'd at the touch, and almost robb'd of breath,
Her senses hover'd on the verge of death.
At length, from her pale lips, a feeble cry
Just breath'd “ Fazello !” while her opening eye
Gaz'd, yet beheld not ; and with piteous tone
Faintly she cried, “ Ah, whither hath he gone ?
“ It was not—could not be ; some evil thing,
“ Mask'd in his guise, but mock'd my suffering.

“Where am I? Who is here? What arm is this?

“O! my Fazello! yes, it is! it is!

“And can it be? alas! a doubt will thrill

“My bosom—art thou, surely, living still?

“O yes!”

“Forgive me! On the turret stairs,

“Pausing, to listen to thy well-known airs,

“The world was gliding from my feet,—I seem’d

“A spirit which all spiritually dream’d;

“Reflection gone, my feet like pinions flew

“Feather’d with joy—I burst upon thy view.”

“Nay, ask no pardon; it were worse than shame

“To think one moment thou could’st be to blame.

“What spells have sav’d thy life? What potent charms

“Have brought thee back thus safely to my arms?”

That moment throng’d such memories on his soul,

An age seem’d time too brief to tell the whole;—

“Nay, I shall weary thee.”

“O, never, never!

“Could I not listen to that tongue for ever?”

“ Gaining,” he cried, “ the nearest mountain’s brow,
“ I turn’d to scan the scenery below :
“ There lay my native valley—there lay all
“ My heart ador’d ; these bowers—this hall,
“ The cradle of my youth—my manhood’s home,
“ Nay more—then ah ! how could I freely roam ?—
“ It was the blessed dwelling-place of her
“ Whose sweetness made me woman’s worshipper.
“ Dearer than ever did each witchery seem ;
“ I felt them,—felt the mockeries of a dream—
“ And starting tears bedimm’d my swimming sight—
“ But turning thence, I sought relief in flight.
“ My page o’ertook me ; show’d the path that weaves
“ Its snake-like track beneath the forest leaves.
“ My senses lost in visions of the past,
“ Loose on my courser’s neck, the reins I cast.
“ Sudden he sank beneath me, and I found
“ Myself, too, stunn’d, and levell’d to the ground ;
“ Nor further knew, till, waking in some cave,
“ I was a living tenant of the grave.
“ Shock’d at the thought, with desperation’s stir,
“ My weak limbs clamber’d from their sepulchre :

“ And, wandering on, to mountain-cottage came,
 “ Where welcome blessings heal’d my wounded frame.
 “ Not so my wounded spirit, which would groan
 “ With thoughts I may not—cannot, dearest, own.”

“ Nay, tell me?”—

“ No, I must not breathe them out—
 “ And they would make my senses hang in doubt,
 “ Whether I still should on my errand speed,
 “ Reft as I was of falchion, page and steed,
 “ Or change my purpose and return to thee.”

“ And could they hang in doubt, yet think of me?”

“ Guide of my life! that wavering of the will
 “ But made my true-love point more faithful still,
 “ And I resolv’d, whatever might betide,
 “ Homeward again, with caution for my guide,
 “ To turn my steps; so once, when daylight wan’d
 “ The borders of the lake I sought, and gain’d;
 “ The moon broke out—I reck’d not—launch’d a
 boat—

“ A breeze arose—with heart and hopes afloat—

“ I rais’d my sail—skimm’d, like a swallow, o’er
“ The sparkling waters—ran my bark ashore.
“ Then, landing, hasten’d through the poplar grove,
“ To trace the favorite turret of my love :
“ When lo! the sight of him that I would not
“ Have met for worlds, impal’d me to the spot.
“ Behind a colonnade, in pensive mood,
“ Before my gaze, my dreaded parent stood.
“ I paus’d,—I look’d ;—scarce had the vision birth,
“ When passing clouds o’ersadow’d heav’n and
earth :
“ Then, veil’d by darkness, I pursued my way,
“ Till, by the breaking moon’s emerging ray,
“ My page appear’d, and, mutual greetings o’er,
“ His lip to secrecy I briefly swore,
“ And bade him fit the chamber which I chose,
“ Deep in the cypress bow’r, for my repose :
“ Then climb’d thy turret, and, supremely blest,
“ Heard thy sweet voice and lute—thou know’st the
rest.
“ But wherefore weep ? does pleasure start that tear ?
“ And yet I feel a strange unwelcome fear.”

"Pleasure? O no,—no, no, indeed," she cried,
 Gaz'd on his face, and, sorrowing still, replied,
 "Alas! 'twas mine such miseries to endure
 "As even thy return must fail to cure.
 "Think on my dreariness of heart when torn
 "From thy embrace, all friendless and forlorn;
 "The rumours, too, which reach'd my sad retreat—
 "Nay more, behold another at my feet.
 "O, had that rival e'er deserv'd my scorn,
 "Perchance his passion I had calmly borne;
 "But his were claims to which I ow'd esteem—
 "Alas! how shall I close my dreadful theme!
 "I see, thou find'st the sufferings I reveal
 "Too much to hear—what were they then to feel?"
 Then, clinging round his neck, to save her fall,
 Sobbing, she said, "and I have felt them all."
 "Yes, I did love him," she distracted cried,
 "But not, my dear Fazello, as a bride."

"Do not," he sigh'd, "that maddening strain
 repeat,

"But say, O say! who knelt him at thy feet?"

“ I dare not.”

“ Dare not! why this mystery?

“ What secret then would'st thou conceal from me?

“ Let me not doubt thee—by the rising fears

“ Which almost melt my manhood into tears,

“ Speak, I beseech thee !”

“ Why wilt thou require

“ The cruel task?—that rival is thy sire.”

That accent was enough ; it met his fears,

And, in their fountains, froze the springing tears.

But when the warmth of pity brought relief,

His icy agony dissolv'd in grief;

In grief, which, ere she sooth'd him, would disdain

To weep one drop,—but then could not refrain.

But, starting, cried he, “ Wherefore stay we here?

“ Haste, Gelardoni, from this house of fear—

“ This place of wretchedness!” She did not know

For what she linger'd, but was loth to go.

“ Alas!” he sigh'd, “ thy folly would not err,

“ Fond as the infatuated villager,

“ Who, after Etna’s earthquakes, will not flee
“ Even the ‘ demon vale’ of Sicily !”

“ No,” she replied ; “ yet do I lack the pow’r
“ To ’scape these perils in the present hour.
“ Nor I alone ; thy frame, too, worn with woes,
“ And weary with long watching, craves repose.
“ Wait till the morrow, and no bird will fly
“ His open’d cage more readily than I :
“ Yet, like the helpless flutterer, where to go,
“ Nor thou, nor I, poor fugitives ! shall know.
“ And then, methinks, how terrible to brave
“ Not only all the dangers of the wave
“ And wayward skies, but that more fearful ill,
“ The fiend of vengeance that will follow still
“ The wild uncertain wanderings of our flight,
“ Provided with no shelter from his might.
“ O, that some supplicated shrine would shield
“ Our hapless loves, and sanctuary yield !”

“ Then stay thee here ; and, ere the dawn of day
“ Shall wake these halls,” he cried, “ I’ll speed my way ;

“ And if compassion be not but a word,
“ Some convent cell that refuge shall afford.”

Yet he delay'd—and who had not?—to find
Her arms almost too fondly round him twin'd.
But shrinking from that touch, as if with guilt,
“ Go—wilt thou?” said she; “ O, I know thou wilt,
“ And in thy couch some needful slumber take,
“ Lest that o'erwhelm thee which may never wake.”

They wept farewell—they faintly breath'd “ to-
morrow !”—

Embrac'd, and parted, lost in love and sorrow.

Then, fearless, he those walks began to wind
Peopled with goblins by his earlier mind ;
But, lo ! the sound of distant footsteps came,
And light was breaking from some hidden flame :
Then faces, ghastlier than each fancied sprite,
Behind a flambeau, burst upon his sight.
Speeding from thence, he, in a ruin'd porch,
A moment lost those faces and that torch.

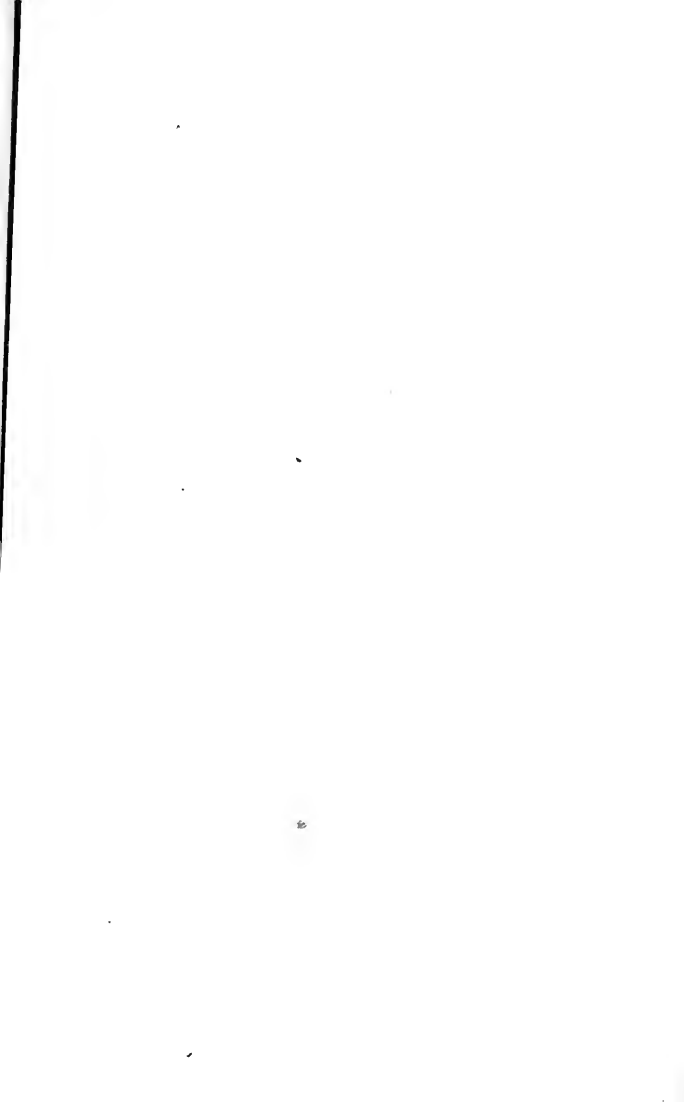
But soon, again, the sound of steps encroach'd
Upon his senses, and the light approach'd,
When searching round a long neglected hall
He stole behind the tapestry on the wall ;
Where, through an opening, by the torch was shown
His sire attended by a man unknown.
List'ning, with fears which almost choak'd his breath,
He found, that sire had destin'd him to death !
And, shudd'ring, heard those horrid accents given—
“ Hence, or I'll slay thee, tho' thou be from Heaven ! ”
Then, gliding forth in terror and amaze,
Departed, like a ghost, before their gaze.

THE END.

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